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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 000422

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR A A/S CARTER, SE GRATION, AF/SPG, AF/E
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND CHUDSON
DEPT PLS PASS TO USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

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SUBJECT: WILY LAM AKOL CLAIMS SPLM WILL STAND WITH BASHIR
UNTIL 2011

REF: A. KHARTOUM 326
[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 315
[1](#)C. KHARTOUM 313
[1](#)D. KHARTOUM 306
[1](#)E. KHARTOUM 250

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Alberto Fernandez, reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Dr. Lam Akol, well-known Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM) turncoat and former Government of National Unity (GNU) Minister of Foreign Affairs, told CDA that he would pass a message to the National Congress Party (NCP) that if it wants to engage with the new U.S. administration, it must communicate that clearly to USG officials sooner rather than later. Akol said that engagement with the U.S. is a central part of Sudan's foreign policy and that in private the NCP has always stated that it wanted dialogue with the U.S. Akol said that the NCP believes that the USG is still "bent on" Government of Sudan (GoS) regime change and is frustrated by past U.S. promises that were never kept. Akol, who was recently ridiculed by the SPLM for veering from the party line, said that the SPLM would stand with Bashir until 2011 because of the importance of the referendum on southern self-determination. He criticized the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), stating that it had not done a good job of delivering peace dividends to the people of the South. He also criticized the leadership of GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit and GNU Minister of Foreign Affairs Deng Alor. While admitting that the South is not without its problems, the CDA told Akol that the U.S. stands firmly behind Salva Kiir in his leadership of the GoSS and the SPLM and stands ready to single out the NCP or any of its "actors" (e.g, Lam Akol) should they try to provoke unnecessary conflict in the South. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) CDA Fernandez met with infamous Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM) "turncoat" and former Government of National Unity (GNU) Foreign Minister Dr. Lam Akol on 24 March at Akol's impressive new Southern Khartoum digs, which boasted armed Sudanese police presence. Akol, who was accused (again) by the SPLM on March 17 for "departing from the party line" and threatened with expulsion, had just returned from a trip to London and was in good spirits. CDA asked Akol for his sense of the post-ICC situation, particularly regarding the National Congress Party's (NCP's) recent actions, including the INGO expulsions, and its perceived attitude of disinterest in engagement with the USG. (ref D)

[1](#)3. (C) Akol told the CDA that the "whole thing" boils down to the historically unfriendly relationship between the NCP

and the USG. He said that the NCP was disappointed that the USG did not follow through on many of its earlier promises, such as Sudan's removal from the state sponsor of terrorism list and the lifting of sanctions, after the NCP signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. "They don't believe anything has changed; they believe that the U.S. treats them the same way it did pre-CPA," explained Akol. While they are grateful to the countries that stood behind the CPA, they have not changed their opinion that America is bent on overthrowing the regime," continued Akol.

14. (C) CDA explained that the new U.S. administration has been open-minded, has not set the policy in stone yet and is willing to talk to the NCP, but that the NCP's reckless and provocative actions since the ICC's March 4 issuance of an arrest warrant for GNU President Bashir communicate a message to the USG that Sudan prefers to escalate and isolate rather than engage. Akol explained that President Bashir's heated and anti-Western rhetoric since March 4 was a tool to mobilize the Sudanese public in his defense; something that former National Islamic Front (NIF) leader turned political opposition figure Hassan Al-Turabi wielded in the early 1990s for the same purpose (ref B). "The President says things that are impromptu sometimes," yet as a Head of State he must weigh what he says, said Akol. He felt that the NCP's actions in expelling the NGOs from Darfur were caused by a need to appear strong before the world after the ICC arrest warrant. CDA countered that the decision made the regime look 'emotional, weak, and incompetent."

AKOL PROMISES TO PASS MESSAGE TO NCP

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15. (C) Akol agreed with the CDA that the NCP should engage the new U.S. administration. It is important to establish a dialogue, he said. He suggested that a dialogue about the INGO expulsions would be valuable, but that the USG must approach and engage the NCP wisely (i.e. - in a face-saving way) on the issue in order to get a successful response. CDA told Akol that the USG had indeed privately proposed a face-saving way for the two nations to discuss the expulsions right after the action was taken, but that the NCP would not meet or talk with USG officials in the aftermath of the March 4 ICC verdict. (refs A and B) The way we see it is that the NCP had slammed the door in our face, said the CDA. They were sending us the perhaps erroneous message that they wanted to escalate, he suggested. If they want dialogue with the Americans, then they should tell that to the U.S. administration, said the CDA. Akol responded that the NCP's post-ICC behavior is strange because they always tell us that they want dialogue with the Americans. I will tell them - how dare you cut off dialogue with the U.S., said Akol, noting that he was sure "the smart ones" among the NCP will soon reassert themselves. Engagement with the U.S. is part of our central foreign policy; we must always engage with the U.S., said the former GNU Foreign Minister. Akol went on to criticize one of his SPLM rivals and successor as GNU Foreign Minister Deng Alor. "Where has Deng been?" he asked. "Why has he not done anything in response to this?" "When I was Foreign Minister (2005-2007) the lines of communication between the U.S. and Sudan were always open," he stated, conveniently forgetting his own past of sloth and obfuscation. Akol promised CDA that he would pass the message on to GNU presidential advisors and Bashir's close confidants Ghazi Salah Eddin and Nafie Ali Nafie.

THE SOUTH JUST WANTS TO GET TO 2011, SAYS LAM

16. (C) Dr. Akol told CDA that the CPA "is the first and last opportunity" for Southerners to have the right to self-determination and suggested that it must do whatever it takes to get to 2011. Our priorities are not your priorities sometimes, he explained. We believe there is a disproportionate amount of focus from the international community on democratic transformation and change in the

North, said Akol. Yes, democratic transformation and respect for human rights are important, but our (i.e., southerners') priority now is the referendum and breaking the cycle of military government-rule, said Akol. "Our loyalty to the CPA makes us stand with Bashir as the President of the GNU," he announced. We are with Bashir until 2011 when the referendum occurs - if he doesn't allow the referendum to happen, then we'll fight. He noted that the SPLM fears that if elections are delayed, the referendum also will be delayed. After 2011, "you can do to Bashir whatever you want."

17. (C) As the SPLM and partners in the GNU, we are dealing only with the consequences of the ICC now, not the legality of it. Akol asserted that Bashir will not be arrested in Sudan by his own people and that the NCP is not divided in his support for Bashir. "They (the NCP) know that today it's Bashir (being hounded by the ICC), but that tomorrow it could be any one of them," he said. According to Akol, the UNSC has two options: to defer the issuance of the ICC warrant for up to a year or to endorse the issuance of the warrant and move forward with the consequences it may bring. He explained that in the short-to medium-term, the arrest warrant has increased Bashir's popularity significantly. The NCP will no doubt play on this, he said. And if Bashir wins national elections - which he will, said Akol - it is just another action that will serve to prove his legitimacy in the eyes of the NCP. Reiterating his message, Akol said, "Until 2011, we (the SPLM), need to keep the GoS regime on track; we need to make sure there is no regime change."

18. (C) Akol lambasted the GoSS for lack of progress in implementing the CPA in the South. He pointed to the GoSS' inability to provide services to its people, lack of good governance, and problems related to insecurity. "If the CPA is to win or fail, it will be in the South," he said. We fought a war in order to improve things, but there has been a lot of "mal-administration" in the South since the war ended, opined the wily Akol. CDA told Akol that the USG is aware of and concerned about the South's internal problems - managerially, economically, and politically - and said that the new U.S. administration would likely focus even more on southern Sudan than U.S. administrations had in the past.

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Akol stated that the Bush Administration's policies were problematic because they divided the Government of Sudan into "good guys and bad guys" and did the same within the SPLM/GoSS. "This is not good for the SPLM, nor the country," he said.

19. (C) Akol also took the opportunity to jab at his own party - "If you criticize them, they think you are bought by the Arabs or the NCP," he said. The CDA subtly cautioned Akol not to intentionally create friction within the SPLM or problems in the South. "We are aware of the problems in South Sudan and we are watching hard to see if the NCP or any NCP actors are fishing in troubled waters," said the CDA. If the NCP plays this game with actors such as General Gordon Kong or Gabriel Tanginiya, there will be a price to pay, the CDA warned (ref E). In a thinly-veiled reference to Akol himself (who is highly susceptible to NCP persuasion), the CDA said that if the USG sees NCP agents purposefully destroying the South, the USG will single those people out. Akol responded that the problem lies within the SPLM itself. "There is a lack of tolerance and views permitted," he alleged. They are dividing themselves and they don't suffer criticism, he added. CDA told Akol that the USG is committed to helping the SPLM/GoSS overcome its problems. Spoken like a true turncoat, "My personal opinion is that Salva Kiir will not deliver," said Akol. Kiir has a position in Juba, a position in Khartoum, a position in Kampala, he continued. "This is not the way to lead," concluded Akol. CDA advised Akol that the USG fully supports Salva Kiir in his position as GoSS President and Chairman of the SPLM and made it clear that the USG will not undermine his authority.

COMMENT

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¶10. (C) While some things the slithery Akol says need to be taken with a grain of salt, particularly when it involves the SPLM or the GoSS, he does have useful insider information about the NCP's thinking and can communicate important messages to NCP heavyweights using his direct channels of communication within the regime. As a former GNU Minister of Foreign Affairs, Akol is aware of the danger posed by a lack of dialogue between the USG and the GoS and realizes the importance of the NCP indicating interest in engagement with the new U.S. administration. His assessment that the South is more interested in the 2011 referendum on self-determination than any other aspects of the CPA, and that it will do what is necessary to get there is probably true. An indicted, delegitimized Bashir and an SPLM that desperately wants its referendum are likely to strike political deals that put both parties where they want to be. The CDA's thinly-veiled hint that the USG will act against NCP agents that negatively interfere in the South was partly aimed at Akol, who is known for his sometimes-nefarious, NCP-inspired activities meant to create divisions within the SPLM and create chaos in the South. Unfortunately, he is not the only tool the NCP can use against the South.

FERNANDEZ